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DEPT FOR AF/W DENNISON, AF/RSA, DRL/AE, AND AF/PDPA LISENBY

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KCOR](#) [KPAO](#) [NG](#)  
SUBJECT: Nigerien Journalist Convicted, Released

Ref: Niamey 1069

¶1. On November 11, a local court convicted Nigerien journalist Alzouma Zakari under Niger's criminal libel statute. The court sentenced him to three months imprisonment (sentence suspended), fined him 100,000 F CFA (approximately \$200), and released him. He must also pay symbolic damages in the amount of one F CFA to the Minister of Interior, who filed the original criminal defamation complaint against him.

¶2. Zakari is a journalist and publication director for the pro-opposition independent weekly "Opinions." Officials arrested him under Niger's criminal libel statutes after Minister Abouba filed a complaint in response to a recently-published article alleging corruption in the granting of a government contract (reftel).

¶3. Comment: Although the court convicted Zakari, the swift resolution of his case marks a welcomed departure from previous cases involving journalists, where prosecutors used continuances and other delaying tactics to detain defendants for lengthy periods while opposing requests for provisional release. End comment.

ALLEN